

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-06

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R 021430Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6510

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2647

LIMDIS

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652\$ GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, IS

SUBJ: ISRAELI ATTITUDES TOWARD ARAB COOPERATION

REF: USDAO TEL AVIV 0661 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. MOST ADDRESSEES WILL HAVE SEEN USDAO
REFTEL, WHICH DESCRIBES CONCERN IN ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCES
THAT " NEXT WAR" WILL FIND ISRAEL CONFRONTED
BY GREATER DEGREE OF ARAB COOPERATION THAN HAS
EXISTED IN PAST. THIS RAISES QUESTION OF HOW
ISRAELIS IN GENERAL REACT TO CONTINUING ARAB EFFORTS AT
COOPERATION. WE BELIEVE THAT MOST ISRAELIS
AND GOI AS WHOLE SHARES IDF CONCERN IN THIS REGARD,
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VIEWING COORDINATION OF COOPERATION IN ARAB ACTIVITIES AS DETRIMENTAL
TO ISRAELI INTERESTS AND ACTIVE DISSENSATION AMONG
ARABS AS NET PLUS. THESE ARE NATURAL REACTIONS IN
VIEW OF ISRAEL'S PAST EXPERIENCE, AND WERE MOST

RECENTLY REINFORCED BY OUTCOME OF RABAT CONFERENCE.
AT SAME TIME CERTAIN RIVALRIES AMONG ARAB STATES--
MOST NOTABLY THAT BETWEEN SYRIA AND EGYPT--AT TIMES
CAUSE ISRAEL SOME PROBLEMS IN EVOLVING NEGOTIATING
TACTICS. PARADOXICALLY, ISRAELIS HOPE THAT MODERATING ROLE
PLAYED BY SAUDI ARAB UNDER FEISAL WILL CONTINUE WITH NEW REGIME,
AND THAT SAUDIS WILL REMAIN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ARAB WORLD,
ESPECIALLY WITH EGYPT. END SUMMARY.

2. AS GENERAL PROPOSITION MOST ISRAELIS BELIEVE COOPERATION
AMONG ARAB STATES IS HARMFUL TO THEIR INTERESTS, A
FEELING WHICH FLOWS BOTH FROM A VIEW OF ISRAEL
BEING IN BASIC CONFLICT WITH "THE ARAB WORLD" AND
A LACK OF MUCH POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN THEIR PAST
DEALINGS WITH THE ARABS. ISRAEL THEREFORE SEES IT-
SELF AS THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF ARAB ENERGIES WHICH, WHEN
COORDINATED IN THE PAST, HAVE INVARIABLY PRODUCED
RESULTS HARMFUL TO ISRAEL. ISRAELIS CITE AS THE MOST
VIVID RECENT EXAMPLE THE RABAT CONFERENCE, AT WHICH
THE SUPPOSEDLY MODERATING INFLUENCE OF SADAT AND
FEISAL FAILED TO MATERIALIZE, LEAVING THE FIELD TO
THE PLO.

3. OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO ISRAEL IS POSSIBILITY OF
COALISCENCE OF ARAB ELEMENTS AROUND SYRIA. IN SPITE
OF GRUDGING ADMISSION BY MANY ISRAELIS THAT ASAD
IS CUT ABOVE HIS PREDECESSORS, SYRIA CONTINUES TO
BE FEARED AND DISTRUSTED HERE TO AN ALMOST IRRATIONAL
DEGREE. AS RESULT, RECENT SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC MOVES
INVOLVING LEBANON, PLO AND JORDAN REINFORCE ISRAELI
BELIEF THAT DAMASCUS IS INTENT ON RECONSTRUCTING
GREATER SYRIA ENTITY OF PRE-MANDATE ERA.
AS EXAMPLE, SUGGESTIONS THAT CLOSEER RELATIONS
BETWEEN SYRIA AND PLO MIGHT HAVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESULT
OF ENABLING SYRIA TO CONTROL MORE RADICAL PLO
FACTIONS WOULD SIMPLY NOT BE CREDIBLE TO MOST ISRAELIS.

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4. OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO ISRAEL RECENTLY IS WARMING OF RELATIONS
BETWEEN SYRIA AND JORDAN, DEVELOPMENT WHICH HAS LEFT ISRAELIS
WITH AMBIVALENT FEELINGS. ON ONE HAND, RECENT
HUSSEIN VISIT TO DAMASCUS HAS RAISED FEARS HERE
THAT IN EVENT OF RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES SYRIA MIGHT ASSIST JORDAN
TO PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE THAN IN 1973, THUS PROVIDING
REAL THREAT FROM EASTERN FRONT. ON OTHER HAND,
ISRAELIS WERE HOPING THAT HUSSEIN WOULD BE INVITED
TO JOIN KHALID, SADAT AND ASAD AT CONFERENCE
IN RIYADH, WHICH MANY ISRAELIS WOULD HAVE READ AS
WEAKENING OF ARAB COMMITMENT TO RABAT RESOLUTIONS
AND JUSTIFICATION FOR GOI REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH
PLO ON WEST BANK ISSUE.

5. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, ISRAELIS FOR MOST PART VIEW DISSENSION WITHIN ARAB RANKS AS SERVING ISRAELI INTERESTS. THUS BOTH CURRENT FLARE-UP OF SYRIAN-IRAQI RIVALRY AND INCREASE IN ACRIMONY BETWEEN EGYPT AND LIBYA ARE SEEN AS DIVERTING ENERGY AND RESOURCES--PERHAPS EVEN MILITARY FORCES--FROM CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL. SIMILARLY, RECENT FIGHTING IN LEBANON, WHILE RAISING SOME CONCERN THAT LEBANON COULD BE SLIDING INTO READICALISM, IS ALSO SEEN AS PREOCCUPYING RADICAL PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS.

6. PARADOXICALLY, ISRAELIS WELCOM SAUDI INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. ISRAELIS ARE AWARE OF CENTRAL ROLE WHICH SAUDIS UNDER FEISAL WERE CAPABLE OF PLAYING WITHIN ARAB ARENA, AND ARE CONCERNED HOW THAT INFLUENCE WILL BE EXERTED FOLLOWING HIS DEATH. WHILE UNHAPPY WITH SAUDI FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF EGYPTIAN ARMS PRUCHASES, ISRAELIS ARE AT SAME TIME AWARE THAT SAUDI WEIGHT HAS IN RECENT PAST OFTEN BEEN THROWN INTO INTER-ARAB SCALES ON SIDE OF POLITICAL MODERATION--OFTEN IN FAVOR OF EGYPT--AND ARE PROBABLY HOPEFUL THAT CAIRO-RIYADH RELATIONSHIP WILL SURVIVE TRANSFER OF POWER TO KHALID-FAHD REGIME.

7. APRART FROM THE IMPLICATIONS WHICH ISRAEL PERCEPTIONS OF INTER-ARAB RELATIONS MAY HAVE ON ISRAELI ASSESSMENTS OF ARAB MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC INTENTIONS, THEY ALSO HAVE OBVIOUS INFLUENCE ON ISRAELI THINKING ABOUT THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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OWN STRATEGY FOR RESUMED NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. IN THAT CONTEXT, UNEASY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGYPT ON ONE HAND AND SYRIA AND PLO ON OTHER BECOMES COMPLICATING FACTOR FOR ISRAELIS. MOST ISRAELIS ATTRIBUTE BREAKDOWN OF MARCH NEGOTIATIONS TO EFFORT BY SADAT TO ACHIEVE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI "ON THE CHEAP". AT OFFICIAL LEVEL, HOWEVER, THERE IS UNDERSTANDING THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SYRIAN/PLO AND EGYPT INHIBIT SADAT'S FREEDOM OF ACTION, WHICH ISRAELIS VIEW AS DISADVANTAGEOUS IN POLITICAL SENSE, HOWEVER USEFUL THOSE DIFFERENCES MAY SEEM TO BE IN A MILITARY CONTEXT. LOGICALLY OR NOT, ISRAELIS ALSO FEAR THAT REAL SUCCESS IN COORDINATING EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN POSITIONS WILL HIGHLIGHT SYRIAN EXTREMISM AT EXPENSE OF RELATIVE EGYPTIAN PRAGMATISM. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY OFFICIAL ISRAELIS THREFORE CONTINUE TO PERFER THE BILATERAL APPROACH, IN WHICH PRES-SURES ON SADAT ARE INDIRECT, RATHER THAN GENEVA, WHERE ISRAELIS ARE CONVINCED ARAB POSITION WILL BE BASED ON LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR DICTATED BY SYRIA AND PLO. VELIOTES

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